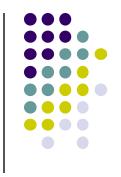
The Accessibility Unit for Students with Disabilities of the University of Athens:

Mission, Services and the 3-year experience from the Psychological Counseling Service

A. Sofianopoulou A. Pino G. Kouroupetroglou A. Kalantzi-Azizi



University of Athens





Undergraduate Students: 98.675

Professors: 2.128

Employees: 2.536

• Faculties: 6

Departments: 34



Students with Disabilities



- Recorded by the Accessibility Unit (2007-09): 251
- Recorded by Faculty Secretariats (2006-09): 372
- Merged: 432
- Estimated: >1000
- Low Vision or Blind: 60
- Deaf: 49
- Speech (+deaf): 84
- Motor impaired: 152
- Other (+diseases): 267
- Estimated + 150%





Mission

- The mission of the Accessibility Unit for Students with Disabilities is:
- to actively realize coequal access to academic studies for students with different abilities and needs, through:
- environmental modifications, Assistive Technologies and access services.









Organization

Vice-Rector of Students' Provision

Council for Students with Disabilities

Accessibility Unit for Students with Disabilities

Dpt. ef e-Access

Dpt. of Structured Environment Accessibility

Dpt. of Transportation

Dpt. of Psychological Counseling

Faculty Secretariats' Responsible

Overview



Council for Students with Disabilities



- Vice Rector
- Professor of Special Education
- Professor of Psychology
- Professor of Accessible Computing
- Representative of the Campus Technical Service (Civil Engineer)
- The head of the Students' Club
- Visually Impaired Student*
- Mobility Impaired Student*
- Hearing Impaired Student *



^{*} Appointed from the National Association of the Disabled

Permanent Personnel





- 1 Electrical Engineer MSc IT
- 1 Civil Engineer
- 1 Mechanical Engineer
- 1 Psychologist
- 1 Digital Document Technician
- 1 Sign Language Interpreter
- 1 Employee for Volunteer service support
- 1 Secretary
- 3 Drivers



Main website of the Accessibility Unit http://access.uoa.gr





Departments



The Accessibility Unit includes the following departments and activities:

- A. Electronic Accessibility (e-access)
- **B. Structured Environment Accessibility**
- C. Transportation Service
- D. Psychological Counseling Service
- E. Volunteers Service (pilot phase)



A. Electronic Accessibility

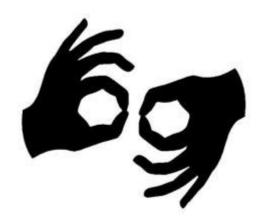
- Evaluation of Students' abilities.
- Provision of Personal Assistive Technologies.
- Technical support of accessible workstations in University libraries.
- Dissemination of accessibility know-how (website, seminars, etc.).
- Organization of volunteer work for helping the disabled students.
- Operation of a Video Relay Service for deaf students.
- Production and distribution of accessible educational material.



UoA VRS Communication possibilities



- Mobile Phone
 - Video call (3G)
 - SMS
- Fax
- Computer
 - e-mail
 - chat
 - Video call (IP)
 - ooVoo (www.oovoo.com)
 - Windows Live Messenger (download.live.com)











Recording the Needs of the disabled students



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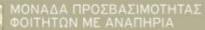
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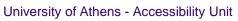
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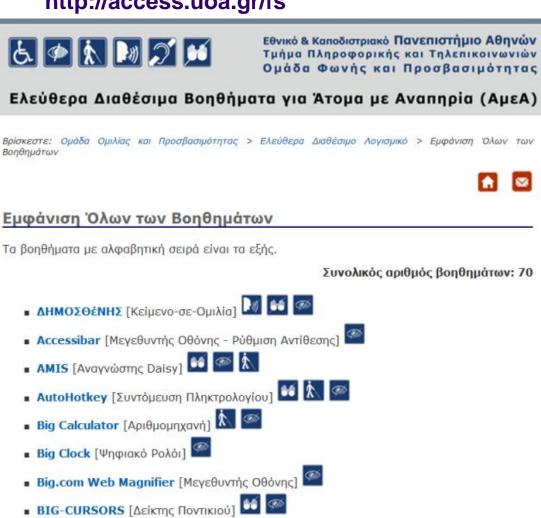
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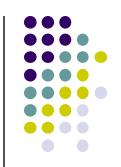
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Contact



Accessible Libraries







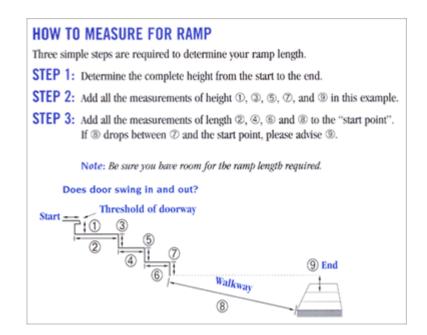




B. Structured Environment Accessibility

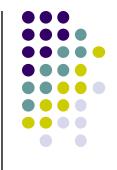


- Validation of accessibility specifications for new University buildings and the external environment of the campus.
- Modification of existing buildings and the external environment of the campus to become accessible.
- Deals with every-day accessibility problems





C. Transportation Service

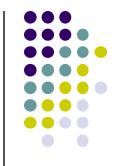


 Arranges everyday transportation to the University of students who use a wheelchair, or those with severe mobility impairments.





E. Volunteers service for Students with disabilities (pilot phase)

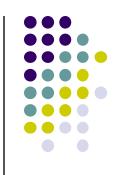


Volunteers (student and community) are coordinated by our Unit to aid/facilitate disabled students in various domains:

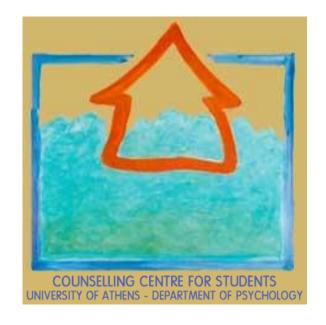
- Mobility
- Communication
- Accessible educational material
- Note taking
- Tutoring in courses
- Tutoring in Computer use
- Studying



D. Psychological Counseling Service

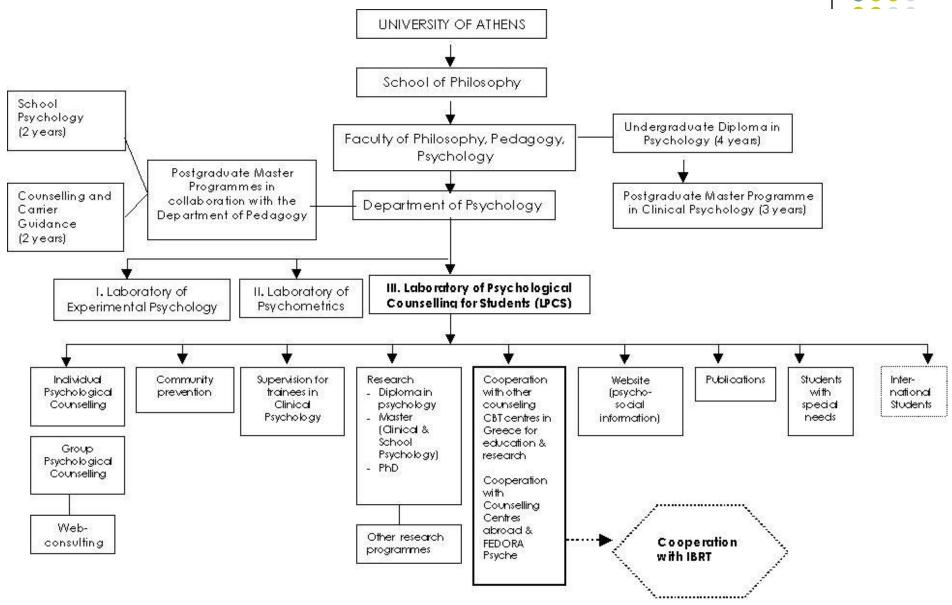


 Provides individual and group psychological counseling to students with disabilities.



The Laboratory of Psychological Counselling for Students, UoA





Past experiences

- The Counseling Center for Students of the Universeitly of Athens has a long experience since 1992:
 - psychological counseling for students with disabilities,
 - other activities concerning inclusion of students with disabilities to the academic community.
- Actions:
 - Horizon No 91003E1
 - Program of training "tutors" and "peer counselors" for deaf students
 - Helios II Working Group 13, 1993-1996
 - Academic inclusion of Students with Disabilities
 - "Higher Education Area and Disabled Students: towards a European politic of inclusion"





Psychological Counseling Service

- Since September 2008
- Services offered at the Students' Counseling Center
- Activities:
 - Individual counseling/ psychotherapy (cbt-oriented)
 - Web-counseling
 - Group intervention programs (cbt-oriented)
 - Volunteers Program (pilot): support for the semester exams
 - Actions for information/ sensibilization of the university community (together with the other Services)
- Addressed to:
 - All Students with Disabilities of the UoA (undergraduate/ postgraduate)
 - Services offered up to 6 months after graduation





Psychological Counseling for SwD

- Similarities with non-disabled students
 - Intelligence
 - Interests skills plans for the future
 - Learning needs (studies)
 - "emerging adulthood"
- Differences with non-disabled students
 - Physical disabilities
 - (Chronic) diseases
 - Functional difficulties





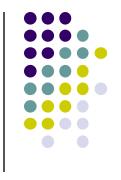
- A disability is not a factor leading to adjustment difficulties
- Possible adjustment difficulties due to:
 - Frustration
 - Continuous stress
- Other factors:
 - Lack of infrastructure needed for academic learning
 - Attitudes towards SwD

Pity Rejection





Usual difficulties



- Academic difficulties/ study skills/ exam stress/ procrastination
- Interpersonal relationships (difficulties with parents, friends or partner)
- Low self-esteem
- Anxiety/ Phobias
- Mood difficulties
- Eating difficulties
- Other problems that hinder students' everyday adjustment and functionality





Interventions

- 4 25 sessions
- Depending on the difficulties and students' motivation
- Confidentiality
- Sign-language interpreter of needed
- Referral if needed

Group Counseling

- 2 h./Week
- 8-10 sessions
- 8 10 participants
- 2 therapists
- Mixed-up groups
- Groups with specific structure and specific topics (eg. stress management, assertiveness training, anger management, selfawareness etc.)
 - Confidentiality
 - Sign-language interpreter of needed







Other activities

- Communication with Professors or University's staff, concerning management of difficult situations.
- Preparing guides for Academic Staff and University Employees
- Editing of Guidelines for semester exams addressed to Academic Staff
- Communication with parents to motivate students to be addressed to the Service
- Volunteers Service Training program of Volunteers, support if needed
- Organization of information events
- Research activities (ADHD, learning difficulties, quality of life and psychological difficulties)
- Participation to International Camp on Communication and Computers for blind or partially sighted youth (ICC)
- Exchange of experiences with colleagues abroad
- Cooperation with similar Units/ Services in Greece and abroad
- Presentations to congresses





Future Plans

- Group interventions for parents of SwD
- Group intervention for communication skills and raise of self-esteem.
- Research on topics:
 - quality of life
 - emerging adulthood
 - psychological difficulties
- Counseling volunteers





Experiences of the Counseling Service

- Access to SwD (website, announcements, information material to Secretariats)
- Requests
 (courses and exams/ difficulties with academic Staff/ employees)
- Therapeutic relationship
- The role and the involvement of parents
- Parents' counseling to motivate SwD
- Individual Counseling Sessions: increase of requests
- Group interventions: low participation interest
- Other Issues:
 - motivation of students
 - management of manipulative behaviors
 - role of psychologist and boundaries needed
 - supervision
 - collaboration with other mental health specialists







Contact

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